During a visit to Rottnest in June, 1975, I noticed that these snails were no longer abundant and in fact were moderately difficult to find. A fairly intensive search showed them to still be present but there had been a catastrophic collapse of the original population. This suggests that these snails have come under some form of biological control in recent times.

—D. H. PERRY, Victoria Park.

Sighting of Black Falcon, Lancelin District.—At about 8.30 a.m. on January 24, 1976, 3.5 km north of the Lancelin golf links on the sand track to Wedge Island, a Black Falcon *(Falco subniger)* was seen. The bird was in flight and then perched on the top of a Christmas tree *(Nuytsia floribunda)* at a distance of 40 paces. The sighting was made with 10 x 50 binoculars with the sun at the back of the observers who were themselves in shadow and there could be very little doubt as to the identification.

The area in which the bird was seen was typical of the district—undulating, covered with knee-high heath with occasional stands of shrubs rising to a height of about two metres. The whole area was rich in insect life, with beetles, some of which were of considerable size and what appeared to be tree crickets, predominating. From the same observation point several Kestrels, two Little Falcons, one Spotted Harrier and one Black-shouldered Kite were also seen.

—A. FEWSTER and M. T. MILLARD.

Mistletoe-bird feeding on Black Nightshade Berries.—On September 19, 1976 a male Mistletoe-bird *(Dicaeum hirundinaceum)* was observed feeding on the berries of a Black Nightshade *(Solanum nigrum)* growing within a fowl-run.

The visits were made during the morning and only the male visited the feeding site. Each visit was heralded by the calls of the bird after its arrival in a nearby Wandoo. The next move was to a support beam on the run, thence to a dip in the wire and, when inside, to the nightshade. After removing a berry the bird flew each time to a projecting twig within the cage, appeared to masticate the fruit, dropping part thereof, swallowing the rest and returning for a further fruit. Two or three berries were thus consumed during the visit. Exit was then made to the outside support beam and a direct flight out across the valley to a Marri some 200 metres away, followed. Several such visits were made during the morning. The nightshade bore a good proportion of black, ripe fruit.

The following week seeds of what appeared to be the above fruit were found inside, at the bottom, of a nest of the Western Silvereye *(Zosterops gouldi)*, apparently recently vacated. These birds had been seen feeding on the nightshade along with the Mistletoe-bird.

—KEVIN GRIFFITHS, Parkerville.

Some Notes on the Native Poplar, *Codonocarpus cotinifolius*.—The Native Poplar is a fairly common plant along the eastern fringes of the South-West province and across the Eremean province. It is a striking plant and easy to recognise on account of its bright green foliage, a shade of green not common in our arid and semi-arid regions. Along the eastern side of the South-West province this plant regenerates prolifically after a fire, grows rapidly to a height of two to three metres and at the age of about seven years it dies down. Regeneration is rarely seen in this region except following a fire.

In the arid country stretching across the Eremean province to the Western Australian border, the Native Poplar is a feature of many of the landscapes. On a journey to Alice Springs (June, 1973) living specimens of Native Poplar were almost non existent. A great many dead ones were to be seen and these appeared to have been dead for

some years as many had fallen over. 1973, 1974 and 1975 have been very good years in this region and copious rains have fallen. A friend who recently traversed this same route to Alice Springs (October, 1975) tells me that there has been a profuse regeneration of Native Poplar, now from one to two metres high. It is interesting that whilst fire is the main factor triggering regeneration in the South-West Province, it does not perform this function in the Eremean Province where continuing heavy falls of rain are required.

—D. H. PERRY, Victoria Park.

Some recent bird observations from south-western Australia.—The following notes deal with some birds I recorded while in Western Australia in February 1976.

Blue-billed Duck, *Oxyura australis*. At least three adults and five young at Lake Seppings, Albany, on February 10.

Marsh Sandpiper, *Tringa stagnatalis*. One bird at Wilson's Inlet on February 14. It was in shallow water only a few centimetres deep and at the northern end of a small island. The bird was viewed at a distance of 20-30 metres. The identification was based principally on the straight bill, light green legs and white in the forehead and foreparts of the face. The general appearance of the bird was that of a small Greenshank. In my field notes I have recorded the size of the bird as being 'slightly smaller than that of a Greenshank but hard to say positively'. The only other waders in the vicinity were a pair of Common Sandpipers *Tringa hypoleucos*, but the Marsh Sandpiper did not associate with them at all. I have previously seen the Marsh Sandpiper near Mildura, Victoria and at the I.C.I. Saltfields, Adelaide, South Australia.

Southern Emu-wren, *Malachurus stipiturus*. One adult male and at least two uncoloured birds at John Forrest National Park from where this species does not appear to have been formally recorded before. These birds were seen on February 7 in a small patch of treeless dense heath with a few bare rocks, one kilometre south of the Park Kiosk and a short distance south of the Lake. The birds' long filamentous tails and the light blue breast of the male rendered them unmistakable.

—LEO JOSEPH, 1 Angas Street, Kent Town, S.A.

An Asian Gull-billed Tern in Western Australia.—On October 17, 1976 I collected one of four Gull-billed Terns at the mouth of the Lawley River in north-west Kimberley. The specimen was later identified as *Sterna nilotica affinis* Horsfield of south-eastern China. Its shorter wing, less stout bill, darker rump and tail, and eclipse plumage readily separate it from Australian birds (adults of which retain their nuptial plumage throughout the year). Even a juvenile Australian bird in our collection with spotted wings has a white rump and tail.

Details of specimen (registered number A14658): exposed culmen 38 mm, wing 282 mm, tail 104 mm, tarsus 30 mm, iris dark brown, upper mandible black, lower mandible black with basal portion orange, feet and legs dark brown, mouth orange. Wings and entire upperparts including tail dull steel grey, a well-defined black stripe through the eye, head flecked black, underparts white. Judging from the plumage stages given in Witherby *et al. (The Handbook of British Birds*, vol. 5, p. 14). The bird was over a year old and moulting into its first summer plumage.

Several subspecies of the Gull-billed Tern are currently recognized. Australian birds *(S. n. macrotarsa)* are the largest with palest upperparts (whitish grey back and white rump and tail) and have the most massive bill. Length of wing, tail and bill in the Lawley River bird are well below the range (310-354, 111-141 and 40.0-46.4 respectively) given for Australian birds by Serventy, Serventy and Warham *(The Handbook of Australian Sea-birds*, 1971, p. 206). Few measurements are available for *affinis;* however Witherby *et al.* state that it has a shorter wing and rather shorter